

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Vocabulary Readers

Olympic Softball Stars



by Gary Miller

Number of Words: 577

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Cover © Wally McNamee/Corbis. **1** © Mitchell Layton/Duomo/Corbis.
3 © Topical Press Agency/Hulton Archive/Getty Images. **4** © Mitchell Layton/
Duomo/Corbis. **5** (bl) © Haslin, F./Corbis Sygma. (br) © Wally McNamee/
Corbis. **6** © Wally McNamee/Corbis. **7** © Wally McNamee/Corbis. **8** © Brand
X Pictures/Getty Images. **9** © James Marshall/Corbis. **10** © Reuters/Corbis.
11 © Skip Brown/National Geographic/Getty Images.

Copyright © 2006 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All right reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Houghton Mifflin Company unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Address inquiries to School Permissions, Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 0-618-64980-8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 B 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

Olympic Softball Stars



by Gary Miller

Strategy Focus

As you read about women's softball, pause and **summarize** what you have learned.



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

Key Vocabulary

conditioning training to get in shape

consoling comforting

discouraged in a low mood; lacking confidence

endurance ability to keep going

sessions gatherings

sprints short races at top speed

squad small group organized for an activity

unconventional unusual

Word Teaser

What do you do if your hair is out of shape?

The 1996 Olympics were an event women softball players had long been waiting for. Softball fans in the United States were especially excited. For years, American women's softball teams had been winning games around the world. Now they were ready for the biggest challenge of all. They would play in the Olympics for the first time.

The first women's softball team was formed in 1895.



The 1996 Olympics were held in Atlanta, Georgia. The women who came to play softball there were driven and determined. They were ready to play as hard as they could.



The United States **squad** included some of the greatest players in softball history. Lisa Fernandez was a pitcher. She had won 93 games when she was in college. She had lost only 7. Dot Richardson played in the infield. She had been chosen four times as one of the top players in the country. Kim Maher also played in the infield. She had set a national record for hitting home runs.

With players like these, the United States team hoped to win the gold medal. But it wouldn't be easy.

Dot Richardson



Kim Maher



The United States got off to a great start. They beat Puerto Rico 10-0. They beat the Netherlands 9-0 and Japan 6-1. The United States lost one game to Australia 2-1. But the players weren't discouraged. They kept their spirits up, and they went on to win two more games.



Then they faced China for the final game.
The winner would get the Olympic gold medal.

In the game's third inning, the score was 0-0. The United States had one runner on base. Dot Richardson stepped up to bat. With the world watching, she hit a home run! That was enough to give the United States the gold medal.



What does it take to become an Olympian? Most softball players get their start at a young age. They begin by learning basic skills. With the help of a coach, they learn to throw, handle a softball glove, and play in the field. They practice their hitting skills. They learn to run bases well.



Basic exercise and **conditioning** play an important role. Young players start slowly, with short practices and games. As players move up to higher levels, they have to work harder. They have long practice **sessions** and regular games.

At the college level, the training gets very serious. Players lift weights to build strength and power. They run short, fast **sprints** to improve their speed. They may ride bikes to improve their **endurance**, or their ability to keep going even when they're tired.



Sometimes, players use **unconventional** training methods. Before the 2004 Olympics, the softball team spent a day with the United States Navy Seals. The Seals are famous for their difficult training methods. The softball players ran an obstacle course. They even dug trenches!

Training can make a huge difference in an athlete's performance. Here's an example. In 1986, pitcher Michele Smith was in a car accident. Her pitching arm was badly hurt. Doctors told her she would be okay, but she would probably never pitch again. This was not **consoling** news. Smith couldn't imagine life without pitching.

Michele Smith



So Smith refused to give up. She started a tough conditioning routine. By 1996, she had made it to the Olympics. She won two games for the United States on their way to the gold medal. She played on the 2000 Olympic team, too.

It's true in softball and in life: Hard work makes all the difference!

**Running is a good
conditioning exercise.**



Responding

Putting Words to Work

1. Why is **endurance** important for a softball player?
2. Complete the following sentence:
I tried **consoling** my friend after her dog ran away,
but _____.
3. What is your most **unconventional** trait?
4. What is one important thing members of the United States softball **squad** have in common?
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

Give it some **conditioning**!

Word Builder

The prefix *dis-* has several meanings. One meaning is “to take away.” The word **discourage**, for example, means to take courage away, or to make less confident. *Dis-* can also mean “the opposite of,” or “not.” Copy the chart below. Write the meaning of each word. If you need help, use a dictionary.

disagree:
discomfort:
dislike:
disqualified:
dissatisfied:

Write About It

Write a paragraph about training for or playing a sport. Use at least two of the words from your Word Builder chart.

Key Vocabulary

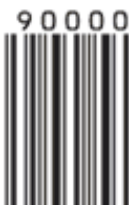
conditioning
consoling
discouraged
endurance
sessions
sprints
squad
unconventional

6.5.1

ISBN 0-618-64980-8



9 780618 649808



90000



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

1-31258